

2003 and part of 2004, and then came 2006. It took them 4 months to establish a government, and then the Maliki government didn't do the kind of heavy lifting we were hoping they would do.

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I took a position that I took then and hold today, that we need to prod the Maliki government. I believe the timeline is important, but not a timeline based on basically pulling the rug out from them and just leaving. We attacked them. They didn't attack us. We got rid of all their army, their police and their border patrol. We left them totally defenseless in a country where all their prisoners were let out, and then we would walk away? The neighbors to Iraq said we may not have wanted you to go in, in fact, said we did not want you to go in, but it would be an outrage if you left. And so now this is where we're at. Do we leave now? Do we leave sometime in the future? What do we do?

I think that what we knew we needed to do was have a new Secretary of Defense. That's what the American people asked. That's what some of us wanted to see happen, and we got someone who wasn't tied to the past in Mr. Gates. Then I think all of us were hoping and praying that Mr. Petraeus would be the general in charge to serve under Secretary of Defense Mr. Gates. General Petraeus who had been there three times, been involved in this effort, and knows Iraq cold and knows the insurgency concerns extraordinarily well, given that he spent a year of his life just studying it. He basically said, give me more people to see what we could do in the greater Baghdad area. It was referred to as "the surge." He said give me more troops; we need to establish some security, and then we'll re-appraise. And now we're coming to that point.

When I was there in December last year, they said we have lost Anbar province. We've just given up on it. We have no troops. It's totally in the hands of al Qaeda, and it sounded to me like a mini-Afghanistan. I go back in April. He said, we're winning Anbar province. I said, what do you mean you are winning Anbar province? You told me you'd given up on it. Well, the Sunni tribal leaders came to us, said we want al Qaeda defeated, we want your help, come on in and we will work with you.

That's what happened. It was a model that wasn't part of the surge, but then when I went back in May, he said the surge is working; we're starting to see some progress from the full complement in July. And when I went back this past August, they said the story is the surge is continuing to go in the right direction, and we have won Anbar province, and we are winning some of the other Sunni provinces. The tribal leaders have bought in to what happened in Anbar and said we want the same thing.

It's almost like, to some of my colleagues in this Chamber, that to say

the surge is working and to say that there is progress, it's like they're angry and disappointed: how dare you say that. You had Mr. BAIRD, a Democrat, who voted against going into Iraq, who said what he saw, and he goes where the truth takes him, was that there is progress, and it would be a mistake to leave prematurely.

So this is what we're going to be debating. Do we leave right now or leave by April of next year or do we maintain the surge a little longer? We know we're ultimately going to bring a good number of our troops home. We can't maintain that surge, and Mr. CARTER's right. I have heard more of my constituents who serve in the military and those who don't, who I've met in Iraq. They said we could accept 12 months. Fifteen months is just too much. And I've had parents, they've come up to me, and they never did this in the past. They kind of put their arm around me. They whisper in my ear practically, and they say, my son or my daughter is in Iraq and they're exhausted.

We know that we have to reduce the workload of these troops. We have to start to tell Prime Minister Maliki what he needs to know, and I'll conclude by making this point: we can lecture Prime Minister Maliki all we want. We can do that if we don't mind being the biggest hypocrites around. So why would I say that? Well, we say, why don't you Sunni, Shias and Kurds get your act together, and I'm thinking, Republicans and Democrats can't even work together on this.

We have asked our Democratic colleagues to allow for some amendments, bipartisan amendments, amendments that would have support on both sides of the aisle. They don't want it. They have simply refused to allow any Republican amendment or any amendment that even their own side wants that would have attraction to Republican Members.

Too many on that side of the aisle want to continue to make this a partisan issue when the fact is we went into Iraq on a bipartisan basis, two-thirds of the House of Representatives, three-quarters of the Senate. The only way we're going to successfully disengage in a way that will enable the Iraqis to stand on their own and bring our troops home is if we do it on a bipartisan basis. I'm prepared to vote for some things that I don't want if it is a bipartisan effort that will ultimately lead to some common ground.

So I just want to say that it strikes me that we ask our troops to risk their lives. They have one request from us, that we, Republicans and Democrats, start working together for the common good of this country. That's their one request, and it strikes me that when we lecture Prime Minister Maliki, he's trying to run a government by consensus, Sunni, Shias and Kurds, all agreeing to take action. He could cut out the Sunnis and just simply agree with the Kurds, and they could run the government. The Shias and Kurds, they

could get their more than 50 percent vote, but he is making a sincere effort to try to find common ground.

I thank my colleague for having this Special Order. I'd like to listen to my other colleagues, maybe jump back in, but my report to this Congress is this surge is working. My report to this Congress is that the tribal Sunni leaders that have asked us to help have seen a tremendous benefit in their provinces, and that has benefited them. It's benefited the Iraqi people, and it's benefited our troops. And so I can't say what will happen two months from now or four months from now; but as God is my witness, we are seeing progress in Iraq, as much as some of my colleagues don't want me to say that.

Mr. CARTER. Well, I thank my colleague for those very, very intelligent comments and for your experience. How many trips have you made?

Mr. SHAYS. I go every 3 to 4 months, and I've been there 18 times.

Mr. CARTER. Eighteen times. Well, my little four don't sound like a whole lot.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, you've been going more recently. I got elected before you.

Mr. CARTER. Well, that's true. I want to thank you and I'm sure our soldiers want to thank you, too.

The trip that I was on, I had some wonderful Members of Congress who are here. A couple of them are here tonight. My friend Mr. DAVIS from Tennessee was there with us, and I believe that was his first trip to Iraq. I would like to yield to Mr. DAVIS.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my friend from Texas for yielding and thank you for giving me the opportunity to visit Iraq.

Being from Tennessee, the Volunteer State, I volunteered to visit the men and women in uniform in Iraq. I wasn't disappointed. Our troops are well trained, well motivated, and successful.

After the fall of Saddam, the Iraqi people had a choice to make. They have lived for decades under totalitarian rule. Over the past 4 years, they've been divided and, quite frankly, confused about who their friends and allies really are. Is it the radical extremists such as al Qaeda or is it us?

During my visit to Iraq, I visited Ramadi, which until a few months ago was a killing field. For the past 4 years, the people of Ramadi were caught in a decision-making battle of which group, us or the extremists, offered them the best chance for a normal and free future.

The insurgent extremist chose to win the local people over with the use of force, force against their American troops and against any local who did not support their radical agenda. Our troops, on the other hand, have reached out in friendship and support.

The local people, seeing the difference, have chosen to have their lives returned to normal and live in freedom. Therefore, Ramadi has gone from a city of death and destruction to one of